Wireless Communications Services for the State of Iowa
Proposed Strategic Direction

The State of Iowa, its departments and agencies, political subdivisions, and other public institutions are exploring the procurement of wireless telecommunications services. The Alliance for Advanced Telecommunications Services, comprised of private telecommunications providers, telecommunications consumers, and representatives of various public organizations, has been asked to provide guidance to the State as it explores options for procuring wireless telecommunications services. Based on the input received, the Alliance offers the following guidance to the State of Iowa regarding wireless services.

1. Wireless services may be suitable for some public purpose activities and programs. When functional needs require wireless solutions, we believe it is appropriate for the State to:
   - Procure wireless services.
   - Coordinate procurement among public agencies, departments, and programs, and among political subdivisions, educational institutions and libraries to capture the best value and maximize productivity.
   - Establish standards and requirements for wireless services, including both technical requirements and functional requirements.

2. We believe that the State should continue to pursue the exploration and application of new technologies, including wireless services, with a public/private partnership approach. It is recognized that the State must follow procurement guidelines, but in the initial stages of strategic planning for technology, it is beneficial for private expertise to be included in the discussions.

3. When procuring wireless services, the State should focus on services and requirements – not on the construction. The State should be prepared for changing technology standards and changing dynamics in the marketplace. The risks associated with these changes are best managed in a private, market-based context. Further, we believe that the State's approach to securing new technology tools should be designed to encourage private investment in technology and telecommunications infrastructure, including private wireless telecommunications infrastructure. The State also should encourage the marketplace to provide solutions that utilize shared infrastructure with private entities, such as business, industry, and the general public.

4. In recognition of the State's financial circumstances, while keeping in mind expansion and possible interoperability, initial procurement activities should focus on current and near term department and program public purpose needs – especially where resources are available to secure the services.

5.   We encourage the State to fully analyze its business processes to verify need and utility. Don't purchase wireless access if you only need mobile storage that is readily replicated with a primary database. Apply the right technology to the need.

6.   We recommend that information about functional needs, any data capacity criteria, coverage areas, or other specific requirements for wireless be shared with service providers before issuing an RFI or RFP. More tangible illustrations similar to those shared at the meeting on January 9 would be useful. In developing RFIs or RFPs, we recommend that the State provide as much detail as possible regarding the architecture and business functions of proposed wireless applications. We also suggest that the State define its requirements for accessibility and authentication, and ask vendors to provide information regarding their security capabilities and authentication services. Finally, we recommend that the State indicate what the proposed length of the service contract will be. Incorporating these elements into the RFI or RFP will give service providers a better understanding of what services the State needs and how they can best accommodate them.

7.   We suggest the State conduct a functional analysis and align similar functions into a single Request for Proposals. Otherwise, the State should pursue separate procurement activities for current and near-term wireless needs. The technology cycle will allow you to integrate more applications over time if you can describe your desired strategic direction for interoperability.

8.   With respect to statewide wireless services, we recommend the State first invite wireless providers to develop an integration or interoperability plan. Establish a reasonable deadline for response. If private providers are not able to identify a feasible solution, then we believe it would be appropriate for the State to set standards for interoperability or to act as the integrator in collaboration with the Technical Group.

9.   Separately, proceed with the development of a Request for Information concerning mid-term needs and future needs for wireless services. Mid-term needs are wireless applications that are planned for implementation in 3 to 5 years, but no short-term implementation is planned due to resource constraints or other issues. Future needs address high-level strategic directions for public purpose applications and services that may provide a planning context for the future private sector telecommunications architecture.

10.   Short, mid, and long-term needs should be clearly defined in an RFI or RFP (e.g., anticipated size of transmissions, percentage of time users would be roaming, number of subscriptions, minutes of use within a geographic area – preferably down to the county level). Needs that are state or federal mandates should also be identified as such.